

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----------|--|
| UNITED STATES OF AMERICA | : | CRIMINAL NO. <u>21-_____</u> |
| v. | : | DATE FILED: <u>January 29, 2021</u> |
| THOMAS GAVIN | : | VIOLATION |
| | : | 18 U.S.C. § 668(b)(2) - disposal of |
| | : | object of cultural heritage stolen from |
| | | museum - 1 count |

INFORMATION

COUNT ONE

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY CHARGES THAT:

At all times material to this information:

1. In or about June 1963, the Pennsylvania Society of Sons of the Revolution (“the PSSR”) purchased a .50 caliber flintlock Pennsylvania long rifle, made in 1775 by Christian Oerter, the chief gunsmith of the rifle works near Christian’s Spring, Pennsylvania, marked “Chris’n Oerter, Chris’n Spring, 1775”, and represented as the only such rifle known to have survived with its original flint mechanism bearing the maker’s name, site and date of manufacture (“the Christian Oerter Rifle”).
2. After its purchase of the Christian Oerter Rifle, in or about June 1963 the PSSR placed the Christian Oerter Rifle on loan with the Valley Forge Historical Society, located in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.
3. In or about January 1971, the PSSR transferred the loan of the Christian Oerter Rifle from the Valley Forge Historical Society to the Valley Forge State Park Commission

for display in the Reception Center of the Valley Forge State Park Museum, located in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

4. The Valley Forge State Park Museum was a museum run by a professional staff that was open to the general public and exhibited historical and cultural objects and artifacts, including artifacts found during excavation of Valley Forge State Park.

5. The Valley Forge State Park Commission was incorporated into the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in or about December 1970, with an emphasis on research, education and interpretive programs.

6. On or about October 2, 1971, defendant THOMAS GAVIN stole the Christian Oerter Rifle from the case in which it was displayed in the Valley Forge State Park Museum.

7. The Christian Oerter Rifle is worth in excess of approximately \$175,000

8. On or about July 5, 2018, in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, defendant

THOMAS GAVIN

disposed of the stolen Christian Oerter Rifle, an object of cultural heritage that is over 100 years old and worth in excess of \$5,000, by selling it to K.K., a person known to the United States Attorney.

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 668(b)(2).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Arbittier Williams for".

JENNIFER ARBITTIER WILLIAMS
Acting United States Attorney